

PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

No. 3. . SECOND SERIES.



PROVIDENCE:
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ORGANIZATION AND SERVICE
OF
BATTERY F,
FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY,
TO JANUARY 1st, 1863.

BY PHILIP S. CHASE,

[LATE SECOND LIEUTENANT BATTERY F, FIRST REGIMENT RHODE ISLAND
LIGHT ARTILLERY.]



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ORGANIZATION AND SERVICE
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BATTERY F,
FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY,
TO JANUARY 1st, 1863.

[READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, MARCH 20, 1878.]

Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, known at the time as the Seventh Rhode Island Battery, and better known in the field as "Belger's Battery," was recruited mainly during the month of October, 1861. The rendezvous during the organization was "Camp Perry," located on the west bank of Mashapaug pond, Cranston, Rhode Island.

Three recruiting excursions visited different parts of the State while the battery was in course of organization. The first, consisting of one section, two guns, with men and horses, commanded by

Lieutenant Thomas Simpson, visited the villages in the northern part of the State, going as far as Woonsocket. I was assigned to this command as a private, and received my first instruction in light artillery service at this time. The second excursion consisted of one gun and caisson, fully manned. This detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Simpson also, visited the eastern part of the State, viz., Warren, Bristol, Tiverton, Portsmouth and Little Compton. I was assigned to this command as corporal or gunner. To partially illustrate the popular feeling at the time, some of the experiences of this trip are here given.

Leaving Camp Perry Tuesday, October 22d, 1861, the command marched to Warren, Rhode Island, and encamped. Wednesday it proceeded to Bristol and encamped on the "Common." Salutes were fired and an exhibition drill given, including dismounting and mounting of guns and carriages, which was witnessed by a large and enthusiastic gathering. Thursday afternoon we proceeded on our journey, passing through Fall River, Massachusetts, and encamped that night in the suburbs of that city, on the

Rhode Island side of the line. The night was bitter cold, and not being prepared for unusual weather, we had our first experience in camp life under unfavorable circumstances. Some of the residents of that vicinity, upon viewing their fences and wood-piles the next morning, were no doubt very grateful that our orders prevented us from stopping with them longer. Friday morning we marched to Portsmouth, arriving at the village of Newtown about noon, where the command was sumptuously entertained by the town clerk at his residence. At night we encamped in "Fort Butts," an extensive earthwork of revolutionary times, located on a hill about one and a half miles southerly from Bristol Ferry. The memory of scenes enacted on this spot, served to increase the patriotism of our little band and strengthen the determination to do all in our power for the preservation of the country in its time of peril. (The centennial anniversary of the Battle of Rhode Island, which occurs August twenty-ninth of this year, is to be observed at this fort.) Saturday morning we proceeded to Tiverton Four Corners, where we were again entertained, this time by Holder N. Wilcox,

Esquire, at his residence. Two of his sons afterwards became members of the battery, one of whom was severely wounded. After firing the usual salute, the command proceeded to "Little Compton Commons," pitched the tents and prepared to spend Sunday with the people of that village. In the evening we were taken to the Town Hall, where a fine collation was served.

I think it was the intention of Lieutenant Simpson to visit Newport before returning to Camp Perry, but orders received Sunday afternoon to return at once to Providence, prevented, and we were obliged to disturb the quiet of a Sunday afternoon in the country, by immediately breaking camp and commencing the return march. The command arrived in Swanzeey that night, just after the close of the evening meetings, and obtaining permission, picketed the horses in a church yard, and the men occupied the church as barracks. The detachment reached Camp Perry Monday, October twenty-eighth, and as there were men in the battery from the places visited, I presume the expedition was successful in its object.

The third excursion visited the western part of the State, but I am not able to give the particulars of the trip.

The battery was ordered to Washington in two detachments, the first leaving Providence Monday, October 28th, 1861, the second following on Tuesday, the twenty-ninth. The routes taken were Stonington Line to New York, Camden and Amboy Railroad to Philadelphia, and by rail via Baltimore to Washington. I was assigned to the second detachment, which reached Camp Sprague during the evening of Thursday, October thirty-first.

The battery was mustered into the United States service at Camp Perry, October twenty-eighth. The original officers were : Captain, Miles G. Moies ; First Lieutenants, Charles H. Pope and George W. Field ; Second Lieutenants, Thomas Simpson and William A. Arnold. The names of one hundred and thirty-eight enlisted men appear upon the roll.

Captain Moies resigned his commission about the twelfth of November, 1861, leaving First Lieutenant Pope in command until the arrival, on the twenty-second of November, of Captain James Belger, who

had been commissioned in the regiment and assigned to Battery F.

Captain Belger was an old soldier, having served ten years in the United States Army in the First Artillery, eight years of which time he was sergeant and first sergeant of Magruder's Battery, and seven years of the service was in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, against Indians. At the first battle of Bull Run, July 21st, 1861, he was chief of the right piece, left section, Ricketts' Battery. He was honorably discharged from the First United States Artillery, at Poolsville, Maryland, September 28th, 1861, by reason of expiration of term of service. His appointment as Captain in the First Rhode Island Light Artillery dates from October 17th, 1861, and he was mustered out of service at Washington, D. C., December 30th, 1864, by virtue of the following Special Order:

“WAR DEPARTMENT,
ADJUTANT GENERAL’S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, December 30, 1864.

Special Orders, }
No. 474. }

[Extract.]

* * * * *

10. Under the provisions of General Orders No. 108, April 28th, 1863, from this office, *Captain James Belger*, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, an escaped prisoner of war, is hereby mustered out and honorably discharged the service of the United States.

* * * * *

By order of the Secretary of War,

(Signed) E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant General.”

Soon after the arrival of Captain Belger the battery was supplied with four ten-pounder Parrott guns, two twelve-pounder howitzers, and a full complement of horses.

The captain had very decided opinions of discipline, and at once commenced the work of placing the battery in a state of proficiency in drill, etc., for effective work.

I well remember an incident that occurred Thanksgiving day, 1861. It impressed upon my mind the

position I occupied as an enlisted man in the United States service. A large number of requests for passes to visit Washington were handed to the captain in the morning, one from myself being among the number. A comparatively small number were granted, and a few of us who felt somewhat mad at being refused, and not having the fear of Uncle Sam's veterans before our eyes, determined to visit the city without the necessary papers. We passed the camp guard, reached the city and had visited some of the places of public interest, when passing down Pennsylvania avenue we were halted by a squad of armed men who demanded to see our passes. I had heard of the guard house, and had no desire to be placed there, as in addition to a feeling of mortification, I was sure to lose my position as corporal or gunner of the second piece if returned to camp under guard. But one of our number was equal to the emergency, replying to the demand that "our colonel was coming, and had them." While waiting with the guard for "our colonel," a soldier who had been imbibing too freely of "commissary" appeared, and while the guard was occupied in attending to his case, we

waited for "our colonel" no longer, but immediately made our way back to camp. A year later I doubt if a provost guard could have been prevailed upon to wait long for such a purpose. The captain had learned of our absence without leave, and summoned us to headquarters, where, in the presence of the officers of the battery, he administered a reprimand in language not to be forgotten, and from that time forward I understood that one of the duties of a corporal was to obey his superior officers, and never attempt to leave camp without the required pass.

The battery remained at Camp Sprague until the second day of December, 1861, when it crossed Long Bridge and many of us stood for the first time upon the "sacred soil of Virginia." Passing through Alexandria, we pitched our tents at Camp California, General Sumner's Division, located if I remember correctly, to the left and in advance of Fort Worth, near Cloud's Mills.

While at Camp California, the sound of the "long roll" and "boots and saddles" at night, greeted us for the first time December 18th, 1861. All was excitement, although there was no confusion, and the short

time occupied in hitching up and moving out on the road, prepared for what might be required of us, was very satisfactory to the officers. We moved to the front and took position on Edsall's Hill, so called, and remained in position there until morning, when we returned to camp, having neither seen nor heard of an enemy.

December 21st, 1861, in compliance with the following order:

“HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
WASHINGTON, December 20, 1861.

Special Orders, }
No. 193. {

* * * * * * *

III. Battery F, Rhode Island Light Artillery, *Captain Belger*, is assigned to Burnside's Division, which it will proceed to join at Annapolis, Maryland, without delay. The Quartermaster's Department will furnish the necessary transportation.

* * * * * * *

By command of Major General McCLELLAN,

(Signed)

S. WILLIAMS,

Assistant Adjutant General.

Official.

ALEX. S. WEBB,

Major and Assistant to Chief of Artillery.”

The battery left Camp California and returned to Washington, bivouacking that night near the unfinished Washington Monument. On the march through Alexandria occurred the first serious casualty, viz: the horse which blacksmith Joseph L. Straight was riding, took fright, ran, and throwing the blacksmith, injured him so severely as to necessitate leaving him in the hospital at Alexandria, and finally causing his discharge from the service, April 29th, 1862.

The next day, Sunday, December twenty-second, the battery was loaded on cars and taken to Annapolis, Maryland. Arriving early in the evening, we were quartered in tents that had been pitched for practice, on the Naval Academy grounds. The men being very tired, for loading and unloading a six gun battery from cars was hard work, anticipated a good night's rest; but during the night, a severe storm of wind and rain arose, and many of the tents—they having been pitched for practice, the pins were driven very lightly—blew down; consequently, instead of the expected rest, they spent the greater part of the night hunting for a dry spot. The next day we were quartered in a college building, where

we remained until the twenty-sixth of December, when the battery went into camp about one and a half miles from Annapolis, naming the spot in honor of the Captain, Camp Belger.

January 9th, 1862, we returned to Annapolis for the purpose of embarking on the Burnside Expedition. Arriving in the city during the evening, we were again assigned to the tents on the Academy grounds, and the scenes of our previous attempted occupancy of those tents were re-enacted, viz: a hundred men looking for shelter, owing to a heavy storm of wind and rain.

The next day, January tenth, the battery embarked—the men and horses on steamer George Peabody, and the pieces, battery wagon, forge, etc., on schooner James T. Brady. The Reverend Mr. Woodbury, in his “Burnside and the Ninth Army Corps,” gives the strength of the command at “twelve thousand men, requiring for their transportation forty-six vessels, eleven of which were steamers. There were also nine armed propellers as gunboats, and five barges fitted and armed as floating batteries, carrying altogether forty-seven guns, mostly of small

calibre. A fleet of twenty vessels, mostly of light draft but carrying a heavy armament of fifty-five guns, under command of Flag Officer L. M. Goldsborough, accompanied the expedition."

The George Peabody sailed from Annapolis on the morning of the eleventh of January, and from Fortress Monroe the next day. When off Cape Henry the sealed orders were opened, and we learned that the rendezvous of the fleet was Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina. The passage from Fortress Monroe to Hatteras was attended by very rough weather, and the scenes on board the Peabody partook somewhat of the ludicrous as well as the serious. Most of the men of the battery were taking their first sea voyage, and their condition can better be imagined than described.

The flagship of the expedition, gunboat Picket, Captain Thomas P Ives, sailed from Fortress Monroe, with General Burnside on board, about an hour in advance of the Peabody, and when we arrived off Hatteras, about two o'clock on the morning of the thirteenth, the latter overhauled her. A heavy sea was running, the beginning of the storm which scat-

tered the fleet, and it was deemed prudent for our vessel to lay by the Picket until daylight, before attempting to round the cape. I shall never forget the noble appearance of the general as he stood upon the forward deck of the gunboat in the early morning of the thirteenth, while the crew of the Peabody were passing a line to the Picket to take her in tow. Our men, or as many as were able to get upon their feet, were drawn up in line on the deck of the Peabody, and gave him three hearty cheers.

Taking the Picket in tow, both vessels arrived at the inlet in safety, crossed the bar and came to anchor in the sound. We all remember the terrible storm that caused so much damage to the fleet, and so much anxiety for its safety at the north. Quoting again from Mr. Woodbury, "the steamer City of New York, loaded with ammunition, the Pocahontas with horses on board, went ashore and were lost; the gunboat Zouave dragged her anchors and was wrecked; the floating battery Grapeshot was swamped, and one or two schooners loaded with forage and provisions were driven upon the beach."

Owing to the terrible gales and storms, the battery

remained on board the steamer much longer than was intended or provided for, and it being impossible to replenish our commissary department, rations and water, also forage for the horses, were getting to be very limited in quantity, and necessarily both men and horses were placed upon short rations, the allowance for the men being a few hard tack, a half pint of water three times daily,—the water being measured as carefully as if it was one of the most expensive luxuries of a soldier's ration,—and occasionally a small ration of coffee.

I remember the first issue of rations after the stock had been replenished. I received the usual hard tack, a thick slice of raw salt pork, very fat, and a little molasses. I think I never enjoyed a meal more than I did that raw pork and molasses.

On the twenty-first of January, the Peabody steamed as near the shore as possible,—there were no landing places that she could reach,—and the battery disembarked on Hatteras Island. It was a very laborious task, and was accomplished without accident by throwing the horses overboard and tow-

ing them ashore astern of small boats, with heaving lines.

While on Hatteras the battery was attached to General Thomas Williams' Brigade, composed of troops who had held possession of the island since its capture by General Butler in August, 1861, and was located at Camp Winfield, about three miles from Fort Hatteras. Our duties at this camp were comparatively light. Occasionally General Williams held a brigade drill, which always included the battery.

We remained at Camp Winfield until the twenty-sixth of February, at which time orders were received to re-embark. The night of the twenty-sixth was spent on the beach at the inlet. A heavy storm of rain and wind prevailed, and being almost without shelter, for it was impossible to pitch a tent that would withstand the force of the wind, it was a very uncomfortable night. On the twenty-seventh we embarked on the steamer Chancellor Livingston, formerly a ferry boat in New York harbor, steamed over the swash and came to anchor in the sound. The wind blew furiously during the night. The steamer

was heavily loaded, and the sea struck her with such force under the guards that it seemed almost impossible for her to withstand the battering. A leak was discovered early in the evening, and water made so rapidly that it became necessary to work the pumps all night, reliefs from the men of the battery being organized for that purpose.

The steamer arrived off Pork Point, Roanoke Island, March second. The crowded condition of men and horses was such as to cause the following letter to headquarters. Those familiar with the amount of room required for a light battery of six guns fully equipped, will appreciate our condition, everything being on board this steamer.

“HEADQUARTERS BATTERY F. 1ST REGT. R. I. LT. ART’Y,
STEAMER CHANCELLOR LIVINGSTON,
ROANOKE ISLAND, March 4, 1862.

CAPTAIN L. RICHMOND,

Assistant Adjutant General,

Department of North Carolina.

SIR:—I have the honor to request that measures be taken as soon as possible to relieve the men and horses of my battery, now aboard the ‘Livingston.’ My men are suffering for the want of a place to sleep and cook in; my horses, one hundred and nineteen, for the want of forage and a place to stand. I

rendered requisitions to the Division Quartermaster for forage yesterday, and it has not been supplied. It is very necessary that something should be done at once, or my men and horses will be unfit for active service if kept aboard this steamer.

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

JAS. BELGER,

Captain Commanding Battery F''

As a result of the above letter, a number of the men and horses were ordered on shore, where they remained until the eleventh of March, when they were ordered on board the schooner Crocker, which was taken in tow, and we returned through the sound. Entering the mouth of the Neuse river on the afternoon of the twelfth, it was evident we were going to New Berne, North Carolina. The passage of the fleet through the sound and up the Neuse river on the twelfth, was a delightful trip. The weather was warm and pleasant, the sea calm, and the disposition of the vessels, the gunboats in advance occasionally throwing a shell into the woods on either side of the river, and the transports following in order by brigades, made the scene a nov-

elty to most of us inexperienced in such sights.

Towards night of the twelfth the fleet arrived at Slocum's creek, about eighteen miles from New Berne, and came to anchor. The night was dark and stormy, but at eight o'clock next morning the sun shone out, and at nine o'clock the infantry commenced landing, which was accomplished by transferring the men from the steamers and sailing vessels to the launches, which were taken in tow by tugs, each tug taking long lines of these boats. At a signal the tugs steamed as near to the shore as they could float, the momentum gained by the launches sent the barges forward until they grounded, when the men jumped into the water, generally about waist deep, and waded ashore. During the landing the gunboats steamed slowly up the river, shelling the woods, but they received no reply to their shots.

The schooner Crocker, with a part of the battery on board, in attempting to enter the creek ran aground, and although tugs were brought to our assistance, night overtook us stuck in the mud. Early on the morning of the fourteenth the schooner floated, and as the forces on shore had advanced, we

were towed some two or three miles further up the river, when we made a landing similar to that at Hatteras, viz: by jumping the horses overboard and towing them ashore, and rafting the guns and caissons until the small boats grounded, then drawing the pieces out by hand.

This method of landing a light battery was, to say the least, slow and tedious business; but the men worked with a will, and soon material enough was on shore to fit out a section, which, with First Lieutenant George W. Field in command, was started for the front. Early in our work the sounds of battle were heard from the front, and we knew that we were needed there. After the guns and horses for the section were on shore, it was tedious and vexatious work getting in condition to take the road; the harnesses were mixed, and it was impossible to get the particular harnesses for the horses they fitted, without losing too much time; but after some delay the section was pronounced ready, and started without rations either for men or horses. I was sent with the command as corporal or gunner of the left piece. We traveled as rapidly as possible in the

direction of the fighting, the sounds of which grew more and more distinct as we neared the front, but it was not our fortune, good or bad, to take part in the battle of New Berne, as we reached the battle-field just after the enemy was routed.

Although the Rhode Island battery did not become engaged at this battle, Rhode Island troops were there, and historians have recorded the bravery and valor of the Fourth and Fifth Regiments, and have accorded to them the honor and credit nobly won on that field.

The battle of New Berne was fought about four miles south of the city. The following description of the works occupied by the enemy during the battle, is taken from General Foster's report, dated New Berne, March 20th, 1862 :

“The breastwork thus entered by the victorious Union army, was a truly formidable barrier — a series of well planned works extending in a continuous line for two miles and a half. It commenced on the river with Fort Thompson, the most powerful of the works erected by the confederates, mounting thirteen 32-pounder guns, four of which bore directly on the advancing union lines. From this the breastwork extended for a mile and a quarter to the railway track, whence the defences were pro-

longed for an equal distance by rifle pits and detached intrenchments, in the form of curvettes and redans, terminated by a two gun battery. The breastwork was mounted with two complete field batteries, besides several small pieces of heavy artillery, and manned by about six thousand men."

Our section, making but a short halt at the battle-field, pushed on towards New Berne and the retreating enemy, arriving at the river, opposite the city, to find the bridges destroyed and no means of crossing. It was late in the afternoon, and both men and horses having been without food, excepting three hard crackers per man issued in the early morning, since the evening before, Lieutenant Field ordered a bivouac for the night, and sent a detail out to forage. The detail returned about eleven o'clock, and at midnight we enjoyed a hearty meal.

An incident occurred during the latter part of this march, trivial in its character, but illustrating the demand made upon us by the inner man. The cannoneers were mounted on the boxes, the section moving along quietly, all seemingly intent upon their own thoughts, when several of the men discovered at the same moment a corncake lying in the

road; simultaneously a dash was made, and notwithstanding the fact that the section would pass over it, and that it would be well seasoned with sand, we were as eager for a piece of that corncake as our children would now be for fruit cake. I succeeded in getting a bite and pronounced it good, only wishing there was more of it.

The remainder of the battery was landed as rapidly as possible and bivouacked that night on the battle-field, joining us the next morning.

Sunday, March 16th, 1862, the battery entered New Berne, crossing the Trent river about three miles from its junction with the Neuse river, and took possession of a boarding-house as quarters for the men, a dwelling for the lieutenants, a dwelling for the captain, a store for the quartermaster and commissary departments, a large stable for the horses, and smaller buildings for mess room, guard house, etc., all situated on Broad street, near the "junction."

Soon after our arrival we were detailed for duty as cavalry. The infantry outposts were established about seven miles from the city, and we were ex-

pected to perform vidette duty and scour the country beyond. The first scout was made Friday, March twenty-first, the party consisting of about twenty-five men under command of Lieutenant Pope. They went about fifteen miles in the direction of Trenton, North Carolina, but discovering no enemy, returned to quarters. We were then sent out in squads of three men and a non-commissioned officer, to patrol the different roads leading into the city. Each squad remained out three days, when it was relieved.

A number of casualties and hairbreadth escapes occurred during this service. Among them were the following:

On the first scout mentioned above, Sergeant Benjamin H. Draper received a severe wound in the leg from a kick by a horse, necessitating an amputation at the thigh. The operation was performed May eighth. He died May 27th, 1862, at fifteen minutes past six o'clock in the morning, at the Academy Green Hospital, New Berne. Sergeant Draper had won the respect and esteem of both officers and men, and his death under such circumstances cast a

gloom over the battery, and it was long before the men ceased to think and speak of him.

Corporal Benjamin F. Martindale was killed May 2d, 1862, on the Trent road, about seven and a half miles from New Berne. At the time of his death he was in charge of a squad patrolling this road, and while on duty discovered the enemy's cavalry riding towards our outpost. In obedience to orders he immediately returned and reported to the officer in command of the infantry outpost that the enemy were scouting in our front. That officer did not credit the report, but implied that the corporal had been frightened by some non-combatant resident of that vicinity. The corporal replied, "I will prove that to you, sir," and wheeling his horse, rode back to his death, as when near the place where he first discovered the enemy, he was shot and instantly killed.

Private Henry Love, while on duty near Deep Gully, about eight miles from New Berne, was severely wounded in the head by a sabre cut. His life was saved by the nerve and steady aim of an infantryman, who shot the rebel through the heart as he was about to strike another blow. Private

Love had been patrolling the road and was pursued by a half dozen cavalrymen, who did not stop until their leader was killed as he was passing the infantry picket.

Private Philip L. Bassett was taken prisoner March 31st, 1862, while on duty near Deep Gully, and was paroled about the twenty-ninth of the next May. His life was saved by a testament that he carried in his breast pocket, a rifle ball passing nearly through the book.

Private George H. Fuller was taken prisoner while on duty near the junction of the Trenton and Pollockville roads, April nineteenth, and was paroled on the tenth of the next May.

There were many other hairbreadth escapes from death or capture while the battery was performing this special duty. The rebel cavalry in our front had learned that we were not cavalry, and that we knew but little about cavalry service, and towards the last of our performing that duty became very bold. But a surprise was in store for them. Early in May, 1862, the Third New York Cavalry arrived in New Berne, and on the seventeenth of May the

artillerymen were relieved from further picket duty by that regiment. From April 14th to May 18th, 1862, Lieutenant Thomas Simpson, one sergeant and thirteen privates, were on detached service at Newport Barracks, near Beaufort, North Carolina, performing duty as cavalry. From this time until July 25th, 1862, the battery remained in camp performing the usual routine of duty.

Saturday, June fourteenth, two guidons, one for parade and one for drill, were presented to the battery by friends of Captain Belger. A full account of the presentation was published in the New Berne Progress. John McConkey, Esquire, made the presentation speech, to which Captain Belger appropriately responded. The battery paraded in full regulation uniform and gave a street drill on the occasion.

I think it was very rare that a volunteer battery secured the full regulation light artillery uniform; that is, the horse hair plume, the cord over the shoulders, the rosette on the breast, and tassels. I never happened to see another during my term of

service, and never saw ours but once after we left North Carolina.

The Fourth of July, 1862, was observed by the troops at New Berne in a spirited manner. Bells were rung morning, noon and night; the command made a street parade in the morning, at the end of which the Declaration of Independence was read before each regiment and battery; at twelve o'clock, noon, a national salute of thirty-four guns was fired from Fort Totten, and also from the gunboats; at six o'clock, evening. Belger's Battery fired a salute of thirty-four guns, and with the burning of tar barrels during the evening, the celebration at New Berne, of the nation's anniversary, closed. Dinner was made the main feature of the day with Battery F, the bill of fare being roast beef, roast lamb, boiled chicken, boiled ham, plum duff with whiskey sauce, pies and hard crackers. Before going to dinner, whiskey punch was served to all freely, the supply having been made in a barrel. The issue of rations of this character, although very rarely served, had a good effect upon the men.

Our service in North Carolina was more like that

of troops in garrison in time of peace, than in the field in time of war, and much attention was paid to the appearance of men and material. A street parade and drill occurred almost weekly. This drill cannot be found in the "Instructions." On these parades the formation was column of sections, cannoneers mounted, and woe to the poor fellow who did not sit straight, with folded arms, for on the return to quarters the guard house and bread and water would be his reward. The parade was usually performed at a trot, and the principal movement was to "In Battery" as if we were entirely surrounded by an enemy, and was executed by the captain giving the order just as the centre section arrived at the intersection of a cross street, "Action front, right, left and rear!" The officer commanding the right section would command "Action front!" the centre section "Action right and left!" sweeping the cross street in each direction, and the left section "Fire to the rear—in battery!"

Any one acquainted with light artillery service will readily see that executed at a trot, in the streets of a city, by a battery equipped in full regulation

uniform, the movements were exciting, to say the least. I think if the light batteries of our militia could introduce some of those movements at their trainings, it would serve to increase the interest of their men and the respect of many who now ridicule everything connected with the militia.

The first organized raid into the country with which Battery F was connected, left New Berne Friday, July 25th, 1862, at about four o'clock in the afternoon. The next day, Saturday, we passed through the village, I am not sure that they did not call it a city, of Trenton, North Carolina, meeting with but slight opposition, the few retreating cavalymen attempting unsuccessfully to burn the bridge before the town. We bivouacked the night of the twenty-sixth at McDonald's plantation, the orders being to sleep by the guns; but a terrific thunder shower passing over early in the evening, or rather remaining with us most of the night, sleeping on the ground was out of the question. I remember just before daybreak finding a board, which furnished a comparatively dry bed, upon which I had an hour's sleep. Returning by a different route,

we passed through Pollockville, North Carolina, Sunday, the twenty-seventh, the cavalry skirmishing some as we entered the town, and arrived at our quarters at about ten and a half o'clock on the afternoon of the twenty-seventh. No casualties in the battery.

Early in August, the post of the provost guard on Pollock street, near the rear of our quarters and in close proximity to post number two of our battery guard, had been fired upon several nights in succession, between midnight and three o'clock in the morning, and one or two men had been wounded. All efforts to discover the party firing had been in vain. Buildings had been searched and everything in the shape of firearms confiscated, but still at this same locality, and about the same hour of the morning, the report of the gun and the whiz of the bullet would be heard. The night of the fourteenth of August was extremely warm, so much so that the guard detail of the battery not on post found it difficult to sleep, and nearly all were lounging around the guard quarters hunting for a breath of air, as it were. The time for the firing had arrived, and all

were listening for the shot. Soon the report and whiz were heard, and about five minutes later, some one saying "Open the door, quick, quick." Following the direction of the sound, a citizen was discovered standing at the door of a house nearly opposite our quarters, waiting to be admitted. The circumstance was immediately reported to the battery Officer of the Day, Lieutenant Pope, who, gaining admission to the house, arrested the man. He, of course, denied all knowledge of the shooting, but claimed that he had just returned from fishing. He was turned over to the Provost Marshal, placed in jail to await a trial, but was either released or escaped, and disappeared from the city. Those most interested in the matter, the soldiers required to perform duty in that vicinity, were satisfied he was guilty, as after his arrest there was no more shooting at that post.

This incident illustrates very fairly, I think, the amount of dependence to be put upon the assertions of the natives that they were union men, and were always opposed to the war. This man was one of the garrison of Fort Macon, captured and

paroled a short time previous, and often told me, at his house,—I was at his house several weeks suffering from an attack of typhoid fever,—about being forced into the confederate army against his will, and that he intended to enlist in the union army under General Burnside, and I had all confidence in him up to the time of his arrest.

Saturday, September twenty-seventh, about noon, a courier came dashing into the city with the report that our outpost at Deep Gully had been attacked. The battery was in the midst of the regular weekly preparation for Sunday morning inspection; the harnesses were being thoroughly washed and cleaned, having been taken apart for that purpose, and we were in a very unfavorable condition for immediate service. About three o'clock "boots and saddles" sounded, and in twenty minutes' time everything was in complete order, and the battery hitched up and on the road for the front. Arriving at Deep Gully we learned, as was often the case, that there had been no necessity for our march, as only a few of the enemy's cavalry had appeared, and they retired after a few shots. The battery immediately returned

to quarters, and at nine o'clock in the evening were as quiet as if no alarm had taken place.

October twenty-ninth, an expedition into the country, under command of General J. G. Foster, started from New Berne, and Battery F was assigned to the command. The troops arrived at Washington, North Carolina, the next day, and remained until November second, when the march was again resumed. It very soon became evident that the enemy would resist this advance. At Little Creek rifle pits had been constructed and a stand was made. Battery F was ordered into position and opened fire, the engagement lasting about an hour. The enemy then retreated about a mile to Rawles' Mills, where another engagement took place. At the two engagements Battery F expended about three hundred rounds of ammunition. General Foster, in his official report of these actions, says:

“ The engagement [at Little Creek] lasted one hour, when the enemy being driven from their rifle pits by the effective fire of Belger's Rhode Island Battery, retired to Rawles' Mills, one mile further on, where they made another stand in a recently constructed field-work. Belger's Battery and two batteries of the Third New York Artillery were immediately ordered into posi-

tion, and after a spirited engagement of half an hour, succeeded in driving the enemy from their works and across a bridge, which they burned."

During these two engagements the battery sustained no loss.

From the monthly return of the battery for November, 1862, the following memorandum of the route and distance traveled by this expedition is copied:

"The battery left Washington, N. C., on a reconnoissance, November 2d, 1862, and engaged the enemy at Little Creek, N. C., twice, same day; dislodged the enemy and bivouacked for the night. Resumed the march at sunrise November 3d, and arrived at Williamston, N. C., at 11 A. M. Left Williamston at 3 P. M. and arrived at Hamilton November 4th, at 3 P. M. Left Hamilton at 6 P. M. and bivouacked within five miles of Tarboro, N. C., November 5th. Resumed the march at sunrise November 6th, on the return, and reached Hamilton same day. Left Hamilton November 7th, and arrived at Williamston same day. Left Williamston November 9th, and arrived at Plymouth, N. C., November 10th. Embarked on steamer Eagle same day, and left for New Berne, N. C., at which place the battery arrived on the 12th of November, 1862. Distance 369 miles."

On the night of November eleventh, New Berne was the scene of intense excitement, caused by the

appearance of the enemy before the city. The pickets were driven in, and many thought the morning would witness the confederate forces again occupying the place. The expedition which had been absent since October twenty-ninth had not been heard from, and the comparatively small force remaining to defend the city, caused a feeling of uneasiness which could not well be concealed. Of course there were natives who secretly hoped for the capture of the entire post, but from some cause, (perhaps they knew better than those in the city the nearness of the expedition on its return), the enemy contented themselves by simply driving in the outposts, and disappeared as suddenly as they came.

Early in December, 1862, an expedition under command of General Foster was organized for the purpose of destroying the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad bridge across the Neuse river, near Goldsboro, N. C., to which Battery F was assigned. Leaving New Berne on the eleventh of December, the command arrived at the bridge near Kinston on the fourteenth, where a lively engagement took place, resulting in the rout of the enemy, they

attempting unsuccessfully to burn the bridge. The nature of the ground where this battle took place, known as the Battle of Kinston, was such that artillery could not be used to advantage, consequently Battery F was assigned to the reserve force. From General Foster's report of the engagement, I copy the following relating to the batteries:

“My artillery (three batteries) I posted in a large field on the right of the road and about three-fourths of a mile in rear of line of attack, the only position they could be placed in. I then ordered Colonel Stevenson's Brigade, with Belger's Rhode Island Battery, forward. The Twenty-fourth Massachusetts supported this battery.”

I suppose this refers to about the time the enemy began to fall back. As I remember, the battery moved to the front at a trot, and took position covering the bridge as the enemy retreated. Remaining here but a short time, we crossed the bridge, advanced through the town and bivouacked for the night in a cornfield about a half mile beyond.

The next morning, December fifteenth, the command recrossed the bridge and continued the march towards Goldsboro, arriving at Whitehall ferry on

the sixteenth, where a short but sharp engagement took place. The enemy had burned the bridge across the Neuse at this point, and were on the opposite bank in some force. General Foster states in the official report, "this being the direct road to Goldsboro, I determined to make a strong feint, as if to rebuild and cross." Battery F first took position on a hill overlooking the river, but after firing a few rounds, moved down to the low land on the river bank and came into action at short range. Nothing could be seen on the opposite side of the river except trees. The enemy's artillery was soon silenced, and the engagement became a battle of a light battery against sharpshooters, the battery being in an open field without cover, and the sharpshooters entirely covered by the thick woods which lined the bank of the opposite side of the river. The ammunition used was shell and case shot, with fuses cut at two seconds. The engagement lasted about an hour, resulting in a loss to the battery of two privates killed, one corporal wounded by musket ball through the thigh, one private wounded by musket ball through the hand near the wrist while thumbing the

vent, causing the loss of the hand, and a number of horses killed.

During the afternoon of the sixteenth the command continued the march towards Goldsboro, and on the seventeenth the objective point was reached. Here the battery was divided, the right and left sections—four ten-pounder Parrotts—occupying a position near the railroad track and opening fire on the bridge and vicinity, while the centre section—two twelve-pounder howitzers—was stationed a short distance to their right, on a hill overlooking a large open field, the Third Massachusetts Infantry being in support of this section.

The bridge could not be easily captured or crossed, and volunteers to fire it were called for from the Ninth New Jersey Infantry. From the large number offering, two were selected, who, after being supplied with fuses, went forward, accomplished the task and returned to their command in safety. While the two men were performing the extremely difficult and hazardous undertaking at the bridge, supported by their own regiment, a portion of the force was busily engaged in destroying the railroad

track. Several miles were torn up and the rails rendered useless by being thrown upon hot fires fed by the sleepers or ties. The object accomplished, and a large and apparently increasing force appearing in our front, the return march was ordered.

Battery F was assigned to the rear guard, but before withdrawing from our positions, the enemy appeared in our front and made an attack. They formed line of battle at the foot of the hill occupied by the howitzer section, and charged; but they did not advance far, for being in an open field, our men were able to work the guns to the best advantage, and made such fearful havoc among them, shooting down their colors several times, that they left the field in great haste, and appeared to be very much demoralized. This was the first time the battery had been charged upon, and being able to see the effect of their shots, the men were naturally much elated over the result.

The casualties in the battery during the day were: First Sergeant A. M. Massie severely, and Sergeant I. N. Gage and Private C. C. Burr slightly wounded. First Sergeant Massie was wounded as he was about

to sight a gun. He had just taken a field glass from his eyes, when he was struck by a piece of shell, completely shattering the glass, tearing off three fingers and half of his right hand, and the flesh from the under side of the arm to the elbow, leaving the index finger and the thumb unhurt.

As before mentioned, Battery F was detailed as a part of the rear guard, and here occurred an incident that came near proving a serious matter for us. In taking the position last occupied we crossed what appeared to be a small brook, the water running about ankle deep, but when we recrossed in retiring, the brook had swollen to be a small river, the water running about waist deep. The cause of the sudden increase, as we afterwards learned, was the opening, by the enemy, of a dam above us, and probably another half hour in that position would have caused us serious trouble.

As is always the case in an engagement, many narrow escapes took place. I will mention but one, which seemed to me to be of the very narrowest. Private A. B. Spencer, at the battle of Whitehall, on the sixteenth of December, was hit in the stomach by

a spent ball, which caused him to suddenly double up, but nothing serious resulted, and the next day, at Goldsboro Railroad bridge, the same man lost a piece of his pants, from underneath his knee, by a fragment of shell from the enemy's guns. In neither case was the skin broken.

The battery arrived at its quarters in New Berne at about six o'clock on the afternoon of December twentieth, having traveled about one hundred and fifty miles.

The alterations and casualties to December 31st, 1862, left the aggregate of enlisted men in the battery exactly the same as at the first muster, and the commissioned officers one less, as follows :

Commissioned officers, three resigned, viz: Captain M. G. Moies, First Lieutenants C. H. Pope and George W. Field; two appointed, viz: Captain James Belger and Second Lieutenant P. C. Smith. Second Lieutenants Simpson and Arnold were commissioned First Lieutenants in place of Pope and Field resigned.

Enlisted men; three killed, viz: Corporal Benjamin F. Martindale and Privates James L. Gavitt and William Nesbit; ten died, viz: Sergeant Benjamin

H. Draper, Privates John E. Bartlett, Henry H. Baxter, William M. Davis, Job Hazzard, William B. Healey, Alonzo C. Horton, Reuben E. Larkin, John McCombe and Jonathan R. Nye; three discharged for promotion, viz: Sergeants Elmer L. Corthell, Peter C. Smith and Frederick Chase; discharged for disability, one sergeant, two corporals and thirty-one privates; transferred to other commands, one sergeant and one private; deserted, one private; total loss, fifty-three. Judging from the number discharged for disability, I conclude the surgical examination of recruits could not have been very rigid. In my own case and that of two others who enlisted at the same time, there was no examination whatever.

The gain for the same time was, one private enlisted in Virginia, and two squads of recruits from Rhode Island, numbering respectively twenty-seven and twenty-five men; total gain, fifty-three.

The wounded were as follows: First Sergeant Alexander M. Massie, at railroad bridge near Goldsboro, December 17th, 1862; Sergeant I. N. Gage, same date and engagement; Corporal George C.

Manchester, at Whitehall, December 16th, 1862; Privates John Butterworth, same date and engagement; Calvin C. Burr, at railroad bridge, near Goldsboro, December 17th, 1862; Henry Love, while on picket duty near New Berne, North Carolina, March 31st, 1862, and George E. Fuller, while on same duty, April 19th, 1862.

The strength of the battery December 31st, 1862, as appears upon the monthly return of that date, was four officers, one hundred and thirty-eight enlisted men, and one hundred and eleven horses, with four ten-pounder Parrott guns and two twelve-pounder howitzers, caissons, etc., complete.

The health of the men at the close of the year 1862 was very good. Six men were absent sick, three of whom were wounded during the engagements in December, and four men were present sick.

January 1st, 1863, found us in good condition for effective service, requiring only one officer and twelve enlisted men to fill the roll to the maximum.

